

00082

1961/03/16

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U.S.C. Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

COUNTRY Cuba

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT Diminishing Popular Support
of the CASTRO Government

DATE DISTR. 16 March 1961

NO. PAGES 2

REFERENCES RD

DATE OF INFO. 25 February 1961

PLACE & Cuba

DATE ACQ. (28 February 1961)

FIELD REPORT NO.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE

Appraisal of Content: 2.

1. The regime of Fidel CASTRO is facing many internal problems. The number of high-ranking officials who seek political asylum continues to grow. Persons previously considered loyal to the CASTRO government are being watched by G-2. Pastorita NUNEZ, director of the National Institute for Savings and Housing (INAV), who has been considered a strong CASTRO supporter, is one of those now being watched by G-2.
2. Many members of the militia are harassing physicians to obtain certificates to exempt them from military duties. One physician in Habana has said that when the militia was first organized he was constantly asked for certificates of fitness for those who wanted to serve in spite of their ailments. The same persons are now asking for certificates showing that they are physically unfit to continue in the militia.
3. In Las Villas Province large numbers of militiamen have refused to fight. Recently a truck loaded with militiamen, shouting "they have arrested us because we do not want to fight our brothers", passed through the streets of Habana.
4. Public attendance at government-organized events in the cites has dwindled. A public meeting on 7 February 1961 in front of the Presidential Palace, at which thousands of students were expected, was attended by only eight hundred, many of them militiamen who were forced to attend. Crowds at the carnival celebrations in Habana in 1961 were small. On 19 February attendance was only about 15 per cent of that in 1959 and 1960. Stations which were televising carnival activities switched to other programs when they realized that the television program was providing visible proof of the failure of the carnival.

- Despite government attacks on the Catholic Church, public reaction to the sale of cards and stickers by Catholic organizations in Habana to collect funds for Catechism Day was favorable.
6. Popular support of the government among the rural population has also diminished. The guajiros in the Sierra Escambray area are reportedly co-operating with the opposition groups. Guajiros have been seen carrying signs which said "the revolution; yes; Communism, no." There is restlessness among workers on the agricultural co-operatives. For the initial five-year period members of the co-operatives were to receive 20 per cent of the net profits, and the government was to receive 80 per cent. The government has taken the entire profits from almost all the co-operatives, and the farmers feel that the government has cheated and deceived them. The government's failure to distribute profits as promised was the cause of an uprising by farmers in Corralillo, Las Villas Province.
7. An indication of the attitude of the working classes towards the CASTRO regime was the drop in enrolment at the Mechanical-Electric School at the Belen Institute when the school was intervened by the government. Despite government pleas that continued attendance at the school was the patriotic duty of all good revolutionaries, enrolment dropped from 300 to about 50.

Headquarters Comment.

[redacted] estimated in late February 1961 that CASTRO had the support of fewer than 20 per cent of the people and that fewer than 10 per cent of these supporters were true fidelistas. [redacted] in contrast to the feelings of the average Cuban in January that the situation was hopeless, many Cubans think that it is possible that CASTRO will soon fall. It is generally believed, [redacted] that approximately 75 to 80 per cent of the militia units will defect when it becomes evident that the real fight against CASTRO has begun.